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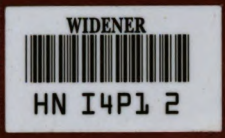

Monument Erected to the Memory of the R. Father E. Masse, S.J. - 1870

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MONUMENT ERECTED

TO THE MEMORY OF

THE R. FATHER ENNEMOND MASSÉ, S. J.,

CANADA'S FIRST MISSIONARY.

QUEBEC:
LE *CANADIEN'S* POWER PRESS.
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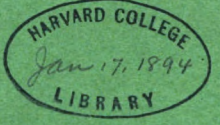

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MONUMENT ERECTED

TO THE MEMORY OF

THE R. FATHER ENNEMOND MASSÉ, S. J.

CANADA'S FIRST MISSIONARY.

—

Yesterday at four o'clock in the afternoon was a great festival at Sillery. An immense gathering of people thronged around the foot of the monument which the inhabitants of Sillery, with a spirit of generosity that does them honor, have erected in memory of Canada's first missionary,—The Reverend Father Massé S. J.

This imposing ceremony, the religious consecration of the monument, was replete with the deepest interest for the spectators, recalling, as it did, the countless remembrances connected with the early days of the settlement. Impressed with the feeling that one stood in presence of the earthly remains of Canada's first apostle, it was impossible to prevent one's

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thoughts straying back to the heroic times of this missionary and his companions, who on the soil of *La Nouvelle France*, set the model of every christian virtue.

The feelings and emotions of all present found a happy interpreter in the very Reverend Vicar General Cazeau, whose remarkable address we publish below.

M. Dobell also addressed the meeting in eloquent terms and with a spirit of liberality beyond all praise.

Hon. M. Chauveau next spoke. He congratulated the inhabitants of Sillery upon their thus doing honor to the first missionary. He especially referred to the prevailing harmony between those of different religions in this Province. It was but last week, many Catholics were present at the consecration of the colors of the 69th Regiment by Protestant clergymen, and now Protestants were uniting with Catholics in handing down to posterity the memory of a reverend Catholic missionary. He concluded by stating, that such harmony was all the more necessary in the present day.

The speakers all paid a high tribute to the researches of the Revd. Abbés Laverdière and Casgrain, through whose labors the resting place of the Revd. Père Massé was discovered, and with whom originated the idea of erecting this monument.

The monument is plain but elegant, and altogether about twenty feet high. It is of cut-stone, with four marble tablets, surmounted

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by a marble cross. One of the tablets bears the following inscription :

The Inhabitants of Sillery
Erected this Monument
In Memory of
Father Ennemond Massé, S. J.,
First Missionary in Canada,
Buried in 1646,
In the Church of Saint Michael,
On the Residence of
Saint Joseph of Sillery.

On another tablet was inscribed :

The Church of St. Michael,
Which formerly stood on this Spot,
Was built by
Commander de Sillery,
The Founder (in 1637) of the
St. Joseph Residence.

The ground upon which the monument stands was given by Mr. Lemesurier, and Mr. Dobell, who resides upon the property, has nobly assisted Messrs. Laverdière and Casgrain in carrying out the project.

The following is Mr. Casgrain's address :

Gentlemen.—The purpose of the ceremony for which we are now met, is that of fulfilling a duty of gratitude, which religion and patriotism alike dictate to us. Both should unite, with but one voice, to do honor to those courageous and devoted men who, at the cost of many toils and fatigues, came into the country, at its beginning, to make known to it the true God and to establish in it true civili-

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sation. Both likewise call upon us to pay a just tribute of admiration to the benevolent persons who, by their gifts and pecuniary sacrifices, have joined in this noble undertaking.

We had already been reminded of this duty, nearly fifteen years ago, by the late M. Abbé Ferland, one of the men of whom Canada has most reason to feel proud. On the 27th October 1855, he published in the *Journal de Québec*, an article intended to complete a work, entitled *Notes sur Sillery*, composed by a man, a friend of his country, whose name we regret we cannot give. After describing the places on which formerly stood the church of Sillery, the residence of the missionaries, the monastery of the Nuns and their hospital, M. Ferland ended his article with the following words: "The "memory of the first missionaries and of the "good nuns who sanctified this spot by their "charity and their zeal for the salvation of "souls, is religiously preserved amongst the "present population, which is nearly all catho-"lic. Let us hope that they may soon be able "to erect some testimonial of their faith on "the ground where the beneficence of M. de "Sillery caused to be built one of the first "chapels of New France."

I am very glad to be able to cite, before the honest parishioners of Sillery, these words of a priest who was well known to most of them, and who has left ammongst them such a blessed memory; for indeed from 1850 to

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1855 M. Ferland was fond of coming to exercise the ministry of souls for them in the modest chapel which is now replaced by the magnificent church of Saint-Colomb; he deemed it a pleasure to share in this manner the solicitude of his worthy friend and colleague Mr. Harkin, the respectable pastor of this parish.

It was to realize the wish of M. Ferland that two priests, admirers of his, but who especially had inherited his zeal for clearing up the obscure portions of our history, undertook to verify the exact position of the places in Sillery which had been sanctified in former times by the presence of the heroic men and women, in the service of religion, who had been brought there by " their charity and their zeal for the salvation of souls." In making their researches they had specially at heart to prepare the ways for the erection of a monument to perpetuate these pious remembrances. In this, Messrs. Laverdière and Casgrain (they must pardon me for mentioning their names) were assisted with praiseworthy readiness by honorable citizens of Sillery who comprehended, as they did, all the greatness and patriotism of the undertaking.

Let me here mention the name of M. Lemesurier, the proprietor of the ground on which the old church of Sillery stood, who placed at the disposal of these gentlemen all the land required for this monument of gratitude. M. Lemesurier has been for many years one of the men who contributed most to the prosperity

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of Sillery and although he has been for a considerable time, retired from business, his name is not the less loved and respected by all the inhabitants of the parish. I must also mention M. Dobell and his partner, M. Beckett, the worthy successors of M. Lemesurier, who not only did all in their power to assist Messrs. Laverdière and Casgrain in their researches, but have contributed with generous liberality to the execution of their project. Nor must I forget the names of Messrs. Langlois and Vezina, who also showed great zeal in this good work. I might name many others ; but I could not finish if I were to mention all those who, within the parish and outside of it, readily contributed by their gifts and acts of liberality.

The monument which is now about to be consecrated is intended to call to mind three cherished recollections : 1. that of the first church of Sillery ; that of the "Commandeur de Sillery," founder of the mission ; 3. that of the Rev. Father Massé, the first Jesuit missionary in Canada, whose earthly remains rest on the ground where we are now assembled.

1. The old Church of Sillery, the first perhaps that was built in Canada, after that of Notre-Dame de Recouvrance, was commenced shortly after the commencement of the Residence of Sillery and was finished in 1647. The mission had been founded with the view of attracting Indians there and laboring to convert them. The building of a house of prayer was therefore commenced, where they might meet to hear

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the divine word which was to enlighten them. Another object was to offer the French colonists a place of reunion, where they might seek consolation in their exile, and courage to meet the numerous trials they had to encounter in their new country. At the present day, as it was at that distant period of our history, the house of God is still the most powerful means of encouraging colonization, for indeed the Canadian settlers of our own days, imbued from infancy with the idea, so full of truth, that their hopes should tend higher than this world of pilgrimage, never apply themselves with energy to the arduous work of clearing lands, until they have near them the temple of prayer, where religion teaches them to render themselves worthy of heavenly rest.

Attached to the church of Sillery was the residence of the Rev. Fathers of the Company of Jesuits who officiated in it. It was after praying in this venerated sanctuary that these worthy successors of the apostles used to disperse themselves among the savage nations, over the vast extent of New France, to bear to them the light of faith and to bring them out of barbarism. This was also the point of departure of the Lalemants, the Jogues, the Brebœufs and all those noble martyrs who shed their blood over the land they had come to purify. Therefore are their names honored among us as highly as those of the martyrs of the primitive church, for they remind us of all the prodigies of heroism, self denial and charity

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achieved by these new martyrs, in order to gain over souls to Jesus Christ.

To the same church of Sillery was also attached a hospital attended by nuns of the Hotel Dieu, called Hospitallers of the Precious Blood. There likewise it was that these worthy spouses of Jesus Christ, bereft of all human consolation, went to seek the courage they needed in order to lavish their assistance, at the risk of their lives, on the multitude of poor indians who were attacked by contagious diseases which almost always led to inevitable death.

2. This monument is also intended to recall the memory of the illustrious man who has given his name to the mission of Sillery.—Noel Brulart de Sillery, was born at Paris, on the 25th of December 1677, of noble and virtuous parents, from whom he inherited a great name and a considerable fortune. I will not undertake to give you lengtly details of his life ; let it suffice for me to say that, after having held all the offices which could satisfy human ambition, he became finally convinced of the vanity and nothingness of that glory to which he had been perhaps too much attached. In the midst of all the pomp he displayed as the ambassador of his sovereign at Madrid and at Rome, he used, nevertheless, to spend a considerable portion of his wealth in deeds of charity. But he felt that God required more from him, and that he ought thenceforward to employ his great riches solely to the acquiring of treasures of merit for heaven. It was in obe-

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dience to the will of God, in this respect, that he completely renounced the world, and even entered holy orders, though he was fifty years of age, in order to render in a manner insurmountable the barrier by which he separated himself from everything worldly.

As the state of the colony of Canada and the conversion of the Indians tilling its forests, had at this epoch awakened a profound interest in France, persons interested in its welfare found it an easy task to induce Mr. de Sillery to engage in this religious work. To set its prosperity on a surer footing he wished to found, in the vicinity of Quebec, a settlement to contain a church, a residence for the missionaries, an hospital for the sick, dwellings for the new converts, and even a fort to protect the village against the fierce Iroquois, whose deadly inroads a terrible experience had taught them to dread. He took upon himself the cost of carrying out this project, destined to be of such importance for the welfare of the rising colony. Such, then, was the origin of the mission at Sillery, which in a short time became a small christian community wherein flourished the fervent piety of the earliest ages of the church.

Mr. de Sillery did not return to Canada, being detained in France by numerous other works requiring his presence there. He became in a measure, the fellow laborer of Saint Vincent de Paul, that priest after God's own heart, to whom no work of charity was unknown, and who afterwards had the sad pleasure of pro-

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nouncing the funeral oration of the worthy priest who had so ably seconded his cherished views. But if it was not given to Mr. Sillery to return to *La Nouvelle France*, where the yearnings of his heart to do good doubtless impelled him, his name will never fail to be cherished there in profound veneration as one of its most illustrious benefactors.

3º It remains for me now to speak a few words of the Reverend Father Massé, to whose memory our monument is erected. Born at Lyons in 1574, he entered the Society of Jesus at an early age. Scarcely had he received holy orders when he was associated with Father Coton, who was then confessor and preacher to King Henry the Great. Judging from human motives the Court might seem a theatre well worthy his admiration, but his views were higher and more noble. Filled with self denial, and thirsting only for the glory of the master whose livery he wore, he chose for the scene of his labors the wild forests of Canada, where he longed to carry the glad tidings of salvation to poor savages buried in the depths of barbarism and having, so to speak, only the name of men.

On his first arrival in Acadia with Father Biard in 1611, he had to put up with much suffering from those very persons to whom he should have looked for protection. Being taken prisoner, along with his companion, by pirates, his patience and charity filled them with admiration, and he was released upon their vessel

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reaching Europe. We learn from the *Relations des Jésuites* that this worthy religious, on returning to France, sighed only for the trials and crosses of the New World. and obtaining leave to return there, reached Quebec on the 19th of June 1625. The capture of this city by the English for years later compelled him to renounce, at least for the time being, the trials he had so eagerly longed to embrace, and he returned to France to await the moment when divine providence would allow him to follow his vocation anew. He had vowed to use all his efforts to resume the crosses and sufferings which he had been obliged to abandon. His prayer was heard. Upon the close of the treaty between England and France, he was allowed to return in 1633 to his beloved Canada, where he passed the last thirteen years of his life, working zealously in teaching the Algonquins and Montagnais, who came to gather from his lips the words of life.

This venerable priest who died on the 12th of May 1646, at the age of seventy two years, is the only one buried in Sillery church, for at those times his companion being called to distant parts to fulfil the duties of their apostleship had seldom the consolation of yielding their last sigh in the house from which they had set forth. The remains of this holy missionary were fortunately discovered last autumn. You, gentlemen, have witnessed the respect paid them by the people of Sillery without distinction of creed. All have instinc-

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tively given way to their feelings of admiration for those chosen souls who shrink from no sacrifice that duty may require.

And now, gentlemen, religion is about to impress its character of stability on the monument I am going to bless in its name, that it may hand down the precious memories I have endeavoured, though imperfectly, to recall to you. I must at the same time invoke the blessing of Heaven on all those who have taken part in its erection. The duty they have fulfilled is one pleasing in the eyes of God who allows no work of virtue to go unrewarded. This monument will suffer from the effects of time, perhaps will it even crumble beneath its cruel ravages ; but the future inhabitants of Sillery, inheriting the noble sentiments of their forefathers will hold it a sacred trust left upon them to repair or renew it if need be, that it may keep alive the remembrance of the privileged favors conferred on their parish in the early days of its settlement, and the memory of the heroic and devoted benefactors to whom they owe them.

R. R. Dobell, Esq., also addressed the assemblage. He said :

My Friends,—It is with no little diffidence that I stand up this afternoon to speak before such a large concourse of people as I see gathered around me. I feel this more, because I am not accustomed to it, and because I know well that there are many amongst you whose

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learning and experience fit them much better for the office, but still more especially, because I have just heard the complete and eloquent oration which you have listened to from his reverence the Vicar-General. However, when my reverend friend the Abbé Casgrain told me that it was the wish of some of you that I should say a few words on this occasion, I gave my ready acquiescence, feeling sure of your kind consideration, and wishing also very much to express to you the pleasure it has given both Mr. Becket and myself, to have the opportunity of co-operating with you all in the work, the result of which we are to inaugurate this day. The lives this monument is erected to perpetuate the memory of, deserve the loftiest strains of praise.

They from no ordinary type of the valiant christian soldier, and embody much of that pure spirit of Christianity which should animate us all.

To appreciate fully the sacrifices which these men made, and the self denial they imposed upon themselves, we should take a glimpse of the glittering prospects of life they abandoned, and contrast them with the thorny and humble path they chose instead. One of the names engraved on the tablet of this monument is in memory of a career full of interest. France, at the period he entered life, was occupying the centre of chivalric glory. A few years previously had seen, upon her soil, four of the most powerful sove-

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reigns in Europe, met together to celebrate "the Field of the Cloth of Gold."

Amongst all the young nobles who assembled at the Court, none had more brilliant prospects than the young Noël Brilliart de Sillery. We read that he was born in the year 1577, on Chrïstmas Day, whence he took the name of Noël, and of distinguished parentage, his father being descended from an ancient Savoy family. He was at an early age marked out for a Chevalier de Malte, and when 18 years old, was sent to Malta to complete his education. There he soon won the confidence of the Grand Master, who, it is said, noted him as possessing no ordinary talents, and he made him his page. He returned to Paris after an absence of twelve years, was admitted at Court, soon rose into favor, and was honoured by Mary de Medici with the title of Chevalier. Afterwards serving as ambassador to the courts ot Spain and Rome, successively, he seemed to have risen to the highest point of worldly success. Everything that could fire the ambition of a young soldier, was now before him. Renown in arms, the popularity of a successful diplomatist and the favor of the first court in Europe.

It was now while apparently in the full tide of prosperity, and while resident as ambassador at Rome, that he decided to throw aside all these honors which he only regarded as idle toys, and which failed to satisfy his eager mind, and we read that he abandoned all and

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devoted himself completely to the service of God. He entered the profession of the church, his zeal prompting him to give all his vast revenues to the interests of his religion, and particularly, to aid foreign missions, and we learn that amongst other bequests, he provided ample funds for the formation of a settlement of Christian Indians. And it was on the ground we now stand and the spot where we have erected this monument, that the first fruits of his noble offering were bestowed.

We feel that this record of the man who founded this place which is honored by his name, should inspire us all with some portion of his self denying zeal, and we mayall learn something from his example. It is therefore, no little pleasure to have to congratulate you upon completing the work and recording his name upon it.—He died at Paris, 26 Sept. 1640.

I must now refer briefly to his contemporary, the Rev. Father Ennemond Massé and I hesitate to cull out of a biography which records a life of such long continued self-sacrifice any single incident for this sketch—he seemed to have borne with cheerfulness all the hardships of life. He was wrecked, imprisoned, seized by pirates, subsisted for two months on roots and acorns, and above all, was one of the first Christian missionaries, to come out to preach the Gospel of Peace to the Indians. It was here he taught and lived and died. No great glory to was be won, and his hearers were a few scattered Indians of the Huron tribe. It was here the first

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church in Canada was built and it was here that Father Ennemond Massé spoke of a Saviour for the Indians—The flag he raised we may all rally around, and if we adhere to it, I believe, we shall all meet again. On it was inscribed these words: *Ad majorem Dei Gloriam.* "For the greater glory of God"—His fellow missionaries who worked with him, record that they were determined mined to await or dare any thing to suffer or die. He died on the 12th May 1646 and was buried in the little church of St. Joseph Sillery—On the ruins of this church we now erect a monument, and before closing, I would tender our warmest thanks, for the great assistance we have received from our friends, Mons. the Abbé Laverdière and the Abbé Casgrain. They first made the discovery, and without them, we should have fallen behind in our work. To you also, men of Sillery, I would again offer congratulations.

It is nearly twelve months since, that we met to discuss what should be done with the mortal remains found here, and you then came forward, and took the responsibility of building this monument. We have to thank many outside friends for much assistance; but to you belongs the credit of the erection of this beautiful monument.

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